

Public Policy Agenda
and Proposals
to the
Governor and State
Legislature

2009 ~ 2010 Session

California
Commission on the
Status of Women

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For more than four decades, the California Commission on the Status of Women has carried out its mandate to advocate for women and girls in California. To better identify their needs, the Commission held public hearings in San Francisco, San Diego and Fontana in the summer of 2008.

The following proposals are designed to meet important human needs and to eliminate inequities for women, thereby benefiting all citizens of California. We urge your serious consideration of these recommendations, even as you seek resolution to the critical budget issues facing California.

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• The proposals in this document
are not listed in order of importance •

2009-2010 Priorities

As priority areas being proposed to the Governor and State Legislature, the Commission supports the following agenda:

1. Establish a universal health care system to provide access to affordable comprehensive health care for all California residents (Health)
2. Ensure community care licensing protects children's safety and refocus the mission of licensing on prevention rather than on penalizing providers (Child Care)
3. Require state data collection on women provide statistics on all ethnic groups in order to develop public policy that better addresses their unique needs with respect to health care, education, and other services (Civil Rights)
4. Develop, identify and promote financial literacy, planning, and management training targeted to women of all ages, including older women and families, through a variety of delivery systems (Economic Security)
5. Adopt new benchmarks for measuring poverty and economic security in California, such as the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard and Elder Economic Security Standard Index, and recalculate the standards annually (Economic Security)
6. Establish a state-level office of equity to carry out oversight and enforcement responsibilities regarding state and federal educational equity laws, including Title IX, and to provide technical assistance to school districts and community colleges (Education)
7. Support programs to encourage participation by girls in math, science and technology to increase interest in high-wage high-demand careers (Education)
8. Support a college/career preparatory curriculum for all high school students to assure postsecondary options for all students upon graduation (Education)

9. Establish an independent state-level oversight committee/commission to review child custody proceedings to better inform public policy, with a particular focus on cases with allegations of child abuse or domestic violence (Family Law)
10. Require judicial education regarding
 - the dynamics of domestic violence and child abuse, including the invalidity of the “Parental Alienation Syndrome” (Family Law)
11. Build criteria into transitional housing, mental health and trauma services that address the increased needs of veterans who have experienced combat-related or sexual-assault-related trauma, with attention to the unique needs of women veterans and their families (Women Veterans)

Public Policy Proposals

Child Care

Working families need access to affordable, high-quality, early care and education that will provide a safe environment and strong foundation for children. In California, more than half of women with children under age six are in the workforce, many in low-paying jobs. Current funding is insufficient to ensure the basic health and safety of children, and is far from providing the nurturance and developmental opportunities California’s children deserve. To increase the availability of high-quality child care to all families, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Ensure that community care licensing protects children’s safety and refocus the mission of licensing on prevention rather than on penalizing providers. (Priority)
2. Increase and streamline funding for quality child care for all children from birth to age five in low-income families, including increased access to child care for families with nontraditional work schedules

3. Develop a comprehensive master plan for early care, education and after school care
4. Advocate for universal preschool with high quality early learning standards

Administrative Proposal

5. Encourage local government agencies to establish model child care programs for workers

Civil Rights

While laws addressing equality have made great differences for women, implementation of laws is not always consistent. In addition, issues of race, gender, sexual orientation and immigration status still need to be addressed. California is a major destination for human trafficking with the majority of victims being women and children. They are subjected to forced labor or sexual exploitation - modern day slavery, perpetually suffering psychological and physical abuse. To move closer to true equality, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Require state data collection on women provide statistics on all ethnic groups in order to develop public policy that better addresses their unique needs with respect to health care, education, and other services (Priority)
2. Conduct a pilot project with selected state agencies to determine how program implementation addresses the issues raised in the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
3. Expand civil rights protections to all California residents, including undocumented immigrants
4. Establish equal marriage rights
5. Support efforts to eliminate human trafficking through education and community awareness
6. Request a Congressional hearing on human trafficking

Study Proposals

7. A statistical analysis of the status of women and girls in California, including immigrants, in order to better inform public policy and state planning
8. A study of access to necessary services in rural communities including Native American communities, with recommendations for addressing needs (domestic violence, child care, health, transportation, teen parents, etc.)

Economic Security

Thirty-four percent of California households headed by a single adult, usually a woman, live below the federal poverty line. Many others are part of the working poor. To move from poverty, these women need education, job training and help in overcoming barriers to successful employment, including substance abuse, mental health problems and domestic violence. To improve the economic security outcomes for all California women, including CalWORKs participants, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Develop, identify and promote financial literacy, planning, and management training targeted to women of all ages, including older women and families, through a variety of delivery systems (Priority)
2. Adopt new benchmarks for measuring poverty and economic security in California, such as the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard and Elder Economic Security Standard Index, and recalculate the standards annually (Priority)
3. Revise state TANF rules to provide incremental cash benefits for children born into families already receiving cash assistance (elimination of family cap)
4. Promote sustainable home ownership in California through individual development accounts (IDA) that focus on building the skills necessary for financial fitness while saving for affordable home ownership

5. Increase access to safe affordable housing for individuals of all ages, including those with disabilities
6. Eliminate barriers to assistance, such as asset limits, finger-imaging and quarterly reporting of income, to increase the amount of Food Stamps brought into California and promote employment by participants

Administrative Proposals

7. Seek regulation changes that allow family members receiving compensation for caring for elderly and disabled relatives to earn Social Security credit
8. Amend the State Plan for Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act to include a strong initiative to train women for non-traditional, higher-paying jobs

CalWORKs

For many low-income families with children, the CalWORKs program is a time-limited, critical safety net. The following proposals are intended to improve outcomes for CalWORKs participants:

Legislative Proposals

9. Assure that the CalWORKs program provides necessary childcare to all current and former CalWORKs families who meet income and eligibility requirements
10. Support cost of living increases for CalWORKs participants and oppose cuts proposed in the welfare services budget
11. Increase work participation rates for CalWORKs clients by expanding the CalWORKs wage subsidy program to additional counties
12. Extend CalWORKs eligibility to adults in recovery for substance abuse and with custody of children upon release from incarceration
13. Require each county to have at least one eligibility worker with special knowledge of programs serving teens responsible for managing CalWORKs aid applications for

pregnant and parenting teens

14. Exercise federal options to pass more child support through to CalWORKs recipients and former recipients
15. Establish a six-month state-funded compliance period with benefits for teens who are in the process of establishing eligibility for Cal-Learn
16. Require that social workers and employment development counselors be consistent in informing CalWORKs participants of their educational options and other aspects of participation and in assisting clients to establish realistic timelines for education and job training

Administrative Proposals

17. Permit CalWORKs participants to count study time as part of CalWORKs work participation requirements
18. Increase the number of CalWORKs recipients enrolled in career and technical education and work-study programs at community colleges to promote self-sufficiency and increase the state's TANF work participation rate

Education

Effective education is essential to both the success of California students and to the economic growth of the state. Despite state and federal laws, gender inequity continues to be a problem, with the result that women workers continue to earn far less than men. To better prepare all California students with a fair and equal education and for postsecondary education leading to high-wage jobs, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Establish a state-level office of equity to carry out oversight and enforcement responsibilities regarding state and federal educational equity laws, including Title IX, and to provide technical assistance to school districts and community colleges (Priority)

2. Support programs to encourage participation by girls in math, science and technology to increase interest in high-wage high-demand careers (Priority)
3. Support a college/career preparatory curriculum for all high school students to assure post-secondary options for all students upon graduation (Priority)
4. Enact a state version of the Federal High School Sports Information Collection Act, requiring high schools to make information regarding athletic participation rates and expenditures publicly available
5. Increase English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for immigrant communities, with ready access within the local community
6. Provide college financial aid to all eligible CA high school graduates, regardless of immigration status
7. Require the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide model policies to all CA school districts regarding transgender students and the laws that protect them

Administrative Proposals

8. Promote nontraditional occupations, including registered apprenticeship, to girls and women in the educational system, especially through career and technical education programs and counseling
9. Encourage community colleges to offer courses in Spanish for Latinas interested in child development careers as a means of increasing the pool of child care workers
10. Ensure that state approved history textbooks incorporate the contributions of women
11. Support programs that build self esteem, healthy self image, and healthy bodies

Employment

In 2007, 59.3% of women age 16 and over were in the workforce, a number currently holding steady. Though women comprise almost half of the U.S. labor force, they still average only 77.8% of men's wages (African-American women earned only 68.7% and Latinas 59% of men's earnings). Women frequently have major caregiving responsibilities in addition to their job duties and are often the victims of discrimination and harassment. To address the employment inequities faced by women, the Commission supports:

Legislative Proposals

1. Require a minimum number of paid sick days for all workers
2. Remove administrative barriers to workers using Paid Family Leave, including improving awareness of CA's paid family leave law among workers and physicians
3. Amend the Paid Family Leave Act and the California Family Rights Act (CFRA) to include adult children, parents-in-law, grandparents, and siblings as family members for whom an employee may take leave to provide care
4. Prohibit employment discrimination based on familial status/care-giving responsibilities
5. Prohibit arbitration agreements between employers and employees that require employees, as a condition of employment, to waive their rights regarding sexual harassment, discrimination and other protections provided by the Fair Employment and Housing Act
6. Continue to strengthen pay equity legislation and its enforcement
7. Support automatic adjustment of the minimum wage to keep pace with the rate of inflation
8. Require that vendors contracting with the state of California provide annual reports to the state regarding their employment of women and minorities

9. Prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of an employee or potential employee being a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking

Family Law

California is failing to protect its most vulnerable children. Whether it is child support enforcement, the foster care system, or the family courts, the rights and safety of many women and children are at risk. Courts are overburdened and court personnel often lack knowledge and resources needed to address the complex issues of domestic violence and child abuse. Women often suffer financially and emotionally as a result of unjust rulings. In order to improve outcomes for children and families, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Establish an independent state-level oversight committee/commission to review child custody proceedings to better inform public policy, with a particular focus on cases with allegations of child abuse or domestic violence (Priority)
2. Establish a multidisciplinary team of professionals with expertise in assessing child abuse and domestic violence to evaluate cases when child custody is in dispute and such allegations are made against one of the parties
3. Strengthen the right of custodial parents to relocate without the risk of losing custody of children
4. Support a State General Fund appropriation to backfill lost federal matching incentive funds for administrative costs in the child support program
5. Require judges, mediators, custody evaluators, law enforcement officers and social workers to receive education on how to coordinate and interface with all appropriate agencies in child custody cases as a means of preventing systems from failing to meet the needs of families

6. Allow children the opportunity to speak directly to the judge regarding their custody and visitation wishes and needs

Administrative Proposals

7. Require judicial education regarding
 - the dynamic of domestic violence and child abuse, including the invalidity of the “Parental Alienation Syndrome” (Priority)
 - transgender individuals to prevent discrimination in child custody matters due to a parent’s transgender status
8. Support a request for a Joint Legislative Audit Committee to audit child custody cases involving allegations of child abuse or domestic violence
9. Establish a judicial performance evaluation system for appellate and trial court judges and commissioners using American Bar Association guidelines

Study Proposals

10. An update of the 1987 “Senate Task Force On Family Equity” report on family law
11. A study of gender fairness in the California family courts

Health

California’s health care system is in crisis. More than six million residents are uninsured. Only 34 percent of women in California are insured directly through their employer and employers are reducing dependent care coverage. Many women, especially those of color, have lower wage jobs and are less able to afford health plan co-payments and deductibles, therefore often postponing needed medical services. To increase the quality of health care for all of California’s diverse population, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Establish a universal health care system to provide access to affordable comprehensive health care for all California residents (Priority)
2. Address the healthcare needs of women through
 - Primary care and preventive and specialty programs for women of post-child-bearing years
 - Expanded eligibility for services, including services to immigrants
 - Protection for women and girls from involuntary exposure to environmental toxins, including in cosmetics
 - Establishing a statewide heart disease prevention and services program for women
 - Streamlining the Medi-Cal eligibility and application process
3. Increase Medi-Cal and Medicaid reimbursement rates for health care providers to assure access to health care for low-income women
4. Establish educational campaigns on
 - LGBT health issues for medical providers and insurers
 - the unique needs of aging women, including women of color
 - the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of ovarian cancer, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, strokes and breast cancer
5. Support increased funding of nurse education, including adequate compensation, to ensure recruitment and retention of qualified nurse educators
6. Support early identification of, and intervention for, children with developmental delays and disabilities, with special attention to gender disparities in all treatments and programs
7. Eliminate the use of “pre-existing condition” in health care plans

8. Prohibit health insurance plans from containing a “transgender exclusion” regarding procedures and treatments related to being transgendered
9. Provide better health care services to California children by establishing a network of school-based clinics and encouraging school districts to reduce the ratio of students to school nurses
10. Increase accessibility to the Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM) program to all eligible women

Administrative Proposals

11. Include safer nail salon products formulation in the Department of Toxic Substances Control Green Chemistry Initiative
12. Provide better breast and cervical cancer services, including coverage of digital mammography, to low-income, underserved and uninsured women through increased case-driven funding
13. Improve access to health care for women with disabilities
14. Develop more culturally and linguistically-appropriate outreach programs and services to reach hard-to-serve Southeast Asian-American women and refugees about pervasive diseases such as cancer and hepatitis
15. Improve enforcement of pesticide regulations designed to protect the health of farm workers
16. Streamline the process of establishing eligibility for services through language-appropriate community-based centers and provide health care guidebooks in multiple languages with information on accessing services
17. Conduct informational hearings for policy-makers on new genetic and reproductive technologies
18. Develop comprehensive and consistent training for health education providers including, but not limited to, a component addressing cultural and gender specific strategies, to promote healthy food choices

19. Promote programs that support recruitment of a culturally diverse health care workforce, including student-loan-forgiveness programs
20. Establish a state interagency task force of regulatory agencies to address nail salon worker and client health and safety issues
21. Encourage professional medical associations to provide increased education for pediatricians and obstetricians/gynecologists regarding post-partum mood disorders

Study Proposal

22. Conduct a study of the viability of better serving rural Californians by providing mobile health services and developing health centers in high schools

Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Currently there is limited access to substance abuse and mental health prevention, intervention and treatment programs, especially for girls. Women who receive appropriate substance abuse and mental health treatment improve their overall health, increase their employment and reduce their likelihood of incarceration. To improve access for women and girls to these important services, the Commission supports the following:

Legislative Proposals

23. Improve access to mental health programs for women and girls through
 - Outreach that promotes mental health and well-being for Latinas
 - Short-term (3 to 6 months) mental health programs for women and girls
 - Linking mental health to substance abuse programs
 - Education on the relationship of depression to sexual trauma and abuse
 - Cultural competency training for mental health providers and clinic staff to eliminate bias based on ethnicity

24. Increase access to transitional housing, including cooperative living arrangements, for recovering alcohol and other drug abusers and their children
25. Require healthcare plans to include treatment of sexual trauma and abuse as reimbursable mental health services
26. Eliminate marketing of “alcopops” and other alcoholic beverage products to underage girls
27. Develop gender responsive approaches in all substance abuse areas of service delivery with special attention to methamphetamine prevention and recovery programs
28. Develop strategies for cross-systems (child protection services, substance abuse, CalWORKs, etc.) collaboration and comprehensive treatment to serve vulnerable women and their families

Study Proposal

29. Conduct a study of the need for and availability of substance abuse services for women and girls and develop recommendations for filling any gaps

Long Term Care and Aging

Nationwide, 59% to 75% of long-term caregivers are women – a value to the nation of more than \$148 billion annually. California leads the way with an estimated 3.4 million caregivers. In addition, the aging population has far more women than men (twice as many women as men over the age of 85). To better address the growing needs of an aging population, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Promote the development of more adult daycare facilities to accommodate individuals with dementia and other impairing conditions
2. Increase state funding for the 11 regional caregiver resource centers and their services,

including financial counseling for caregivers

3. Measure the impact of caregiving on caregivers through inclusion in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Reproductive Health

Women’s reproductive rights continue to be under attack. Low-income women face barriers to accessing reproductive health care services, including contraception. HIV/AIDS is increasingly affecting women. To reduce teen pregnancy, it is critical for teens to receive accurate, comprehensive sex education. To protect the reproductive health and safety of women, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Improve access to birth control and emergency contraception for all low-income women of reproductive age, including continued education on pharmacy access and programs targeted to specific ethnic groups
2. Support microbicide research to improve the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS and to provide women with greater control over their reproductive health
3. Conduct an education campaign about HPV (Human Papillomavirus), including the role male partners play in the spread of HPV and the potential value of HPV vaccines for both boys and girls
4. Provide access to condoms in prison to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS among prisoners while incarcerated and infection of their partners after release from prison
5. Develop or strengthen programs that address the issue of women and HIV/AIDS, especially minority women, with appropriate public education, testing, and female-specific research on HIV medication dosages for women
6. Require health insurance plans to cover fertility treatment and maternity services

7. Ensure access and affordability of birth control for women students in higher education

Administrative Proposals

9. Include emergency contraception awareness information in reproductive health materials distributed by the state
10. Change regulations to allow pharmacists to presumptively enroll women in Family PACT and Medi-Cal in order to ensure low-income women have access to emergency contraception

Crisis Pregnancy Centers

"Crisis pregnancy" or "pregnancy resource" centers appear to be health clinics, but do not provide comprehensive health care or employ medical professionals. Instead, they are primarily staffed by anti-abortion volunteers who attempt to coerce women, especially college students, away from considering abortion as an option for an unintentional pregnancy, preventing them from receiving unbiased and complete medical information. To help eliminate dissemination of false medical information about abortion and improve young women's access to comprehensive reproductive health care services, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

11. Prohibit use of state-administered funding for crisis pregnancy centers that do not provide accurate medical information to clients and that fail to inform them of their anti-abortion position, including in public advertisements
12. Request the California Department of Public Health to work with community colleges and universities to establish Family PACT programs on campus in order to provide better access to quality reproductive health services to women students

Administrative Proposal

13. Request the Department of Health Care Services to investigate crisis pregnancy center

practices, including the accuracy of information presented to clients

Teen Pregnancy & Parenting

Teen birth rates are now increasing in California. Teen mothers are more likely than their peers, who delay child-bearing, to live in poverty and rely on welfare. Many of these young women have lower educational attainment because seventy percent of them drop out of high school. To increase success for all youth, including parenting teens, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

14. Increase supportive programs for expectant and parenting teens, including increased Cal-SAFE funding, with access to transportation and child care, with adequate data collection and quality evaluation in order to decrease drop-out rates and increase high school graduation rates
15. Fully fund and support medically accurate comprehensive sexuality education programs that link sexually active youth with reproductive health care services, including monitoring of schools to ensure compliance with state law
16. Ensure that health textbooks used in the state include age-appropriate comprehensive sexual health education
17. Increase funding for programs addressing teen pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted infections

Violence

Violence against women has wide-ranging and long-term physical and psychological effects on victims and their children. The rate of violence against women is much higher for minority women, especially Native-Americans. Six percent of California women suffer physical injuries from domestic violence every year. Women 16 to 24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence as well as sexual assault.

There is one forcible rape every 56 minutes in

California. Fifty-one percent of sexual assaults are committed against women between 16 and 21 years old. In view of these realities, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Increase funding for sexual assault and domestic violence (DV) programs with special attention to the following:
 - DV services, including education and shelters for women and children
 - Sexual assault services and education programs
 - Culturally appropriate programs, especially in remote rural areas, for Native-American, Latino and immigrant families
 - An integrated statewide domestic violence data collection system
 - Extensive training of law enforcement, especially rural officers, on domestic violence and sexual assault issues
2. Re-examine victim services eligibility for victims of violent crimes who have criminal histories
3. Provide protections for the use of RFID chips (radio frequency identification devices that contain personal information) in government-issued identity documents
4. Require that a person who obtains a restraining order be notified when a termination hearing is scheduled and/or when the restraining order has been terminated by the courts
5. Request an audit of the practices and effectiveness of the courts, probation departments, and batterer intervention programs in order to identify strategies to more effectively work with batterers
6. Increase services to survivors of domestic violence by providing:
 - greater access to mental health funding and services
 - vouchers for affordable permanent housing

- access to limited English language services
- co-located services for survivors and their children

7. Incorporate recognition, prevention, and intervention of family violence into all programs designed to address gang violence

Administrative Proposal

8. Provide legislative briefings on domestic violence and its impact on women and their families

Study Proposal

9. A study of disparities in services to victims of sexual assault

Sexually Exploited Minors

Commercial sexual exploitation of minors and child prostitution in California have significantly increased in recent years. Exploited, prostituted youth are usually girls 11 to 15 years of age. The sexual exploitation of youth has become increasingly violent and more organized. To better identify sexually exploited minors and respond to their specific needs, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

10. Provide specialized services, education and service/protocol coordination, case management, intervention and prevention programming for sexually exploited minors
11. Require that a sexually exploited minor taken into custody by law enforcement be housed at a juvenile facility on a victim custody hold until the best placement option and services are identified and initiated
12. Provide sexually exploited minors with the right to an advocate in court-related proceedings
13. Provide training for law enforcement, district attorneys, judges, first responders and faith-based organizations regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of domestic minors and minors from other countries

Study Proposal

14. A study to create a “baseline” picture of the incidence of sexually exploited minors regionally and statewide, including contributing risk factors, in order to determine how and where to allocate resources

Teen Dating Violence

One in three teens experience abuse in a relationship, putting them at risk of a variety of destructive behaviors including dropping out of school, considering suicide, use of drugs, etc. Teens are four times as likely to be victims of sexual assault than women of other ages, and the vast majority of those crimes are committed by someone the victim knows. In order to protect the safety of teens, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

15. Require the State Department of Education to include teen dating violence education, including prevention and healthy relationships, in its current health curriculum framework
16. Require school districts to establish a policy and protocol for preventing teen dating violence in middle and high school, including education and training for students, educators and staff with curriculum developed in consultation with experts in this field
17. List dating violence as a separately enumerated offense for which students can be suspended or expelled under California’s Education Code

Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System

Women and Corrections

California’s drug offense and three-strikes laws have contributed to a dramatic increase in incarcerated women (currently almost 12,000), in a system designed for male offenders. To

facilitate the rehabilitation and treatment of women prisoners, the majority of whom are low-risk and non-violent, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Implement the recommendations of the Little Hoover Commission and the Gender Responsive Strategies Commission of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), providing for gender appropriate services within the prisons, including the following:
 - Establish community-based facilities and programs with a strong emphasis on rehabilitation for women convicted of non-violent and non-serious crimes
 - Develop and implement a plan to train new service providers for community-based facilities, including training on the issues of alcohol and other drugs
 - Develop a strong public relations campaign to gain community support for new facilities
 - Conduct a comprehensive review of operational practices in women’s prisons to determine if changes are needed in order to be gender responsive to women’s needs
 - Support the establishment of an occupation staffing plan that protects the safety of women
2. Seek sentencing reform to move away from the punitive model now in place for low-risk inmates
3. Require that all medical personnel in female prisons be state licensed and preferably board certified in a women’s health specialty area and that medical services be provided by appropriate medical personnel
4. Abolish in-house prison infirmary visit charges to prisoners
5. Require transgender cultural competency training for CDCR staff and contract employees
6. Require CDCR to develop policies to assure the safety of aging prisoners, including a geriatric

work policy, “Elder Helper” assistance, age-appropriate living facilities, and transitional housing for released older women

7. Provide pre-release orientation, transitional housing, and case management plans for women leaving prison, including coordination with parole and community services

8. Establish re-entry courts to help reduce the recidivism rate of incarcerated women

Administrative Proposals

9. Assess the prison population of women over 55 with life sentences, excluding those sentenced for life without parole, and conduct a comprehensive risk assessment to determine who would be eligible for parole
10. Establish gender responsive parole caseloads for women and girls and train parole units in gender specific strategies

Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

The number of girls in the juvenile justice system has increased dramatically in recent years. Preventive programs targeted to all youth are essential at the local level. In addition, to reduce the number incarcerated, the system must address the need for treatment programs and for greater oversight of the system itself. For these reasons, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Administrative Proposals

11. Fund gender responsive programs for girls that are an alternative to custody in the juvenile justice system
12. Seek enforcement of responsible oversight of the systems for girls in local and state detention facilities
13. Address barriers, including funding, to provide drug and alcohol abuse programs to serve adolescents before they become part of the adult correctional system

14. Provide pre- and post-release services to girls, including support for community-based services and mental health services, in order to create successful re-entry plans

15. Provide training to establish gender specific and responsive parole units trained to work with the unique skills and needs of young women

Women Veterans

The role of women in the military has changed significantly in the past decade. Currently 15% of active duty military personnel are women. Of the 1.7 million women veterans nationally, 165,000 reside in California – more than any other state. Because programs serving veterans have traditionally focused on men, women veterans returning from duty in conflict areas frequently lack access to services that are gender specific. To help address their needs, the Commission supports the following agenda:

Legislative Proposals

1. Build criteria into transitional housing, mental health and trauma services that address the increased needs of veterans who have experienced combat-related or sexual-assault-related trauma, with attention to the unique needs of women veterans and their families (Priority)
2. Assure funding for veteran services to address the unique needs of women veterans

Administrative Proposals

3. Better inform veterans of their eligibility for benefits upon exiting the service
4. Better inform employers of the rights of reservists while under contract for military service, including the right to compete for advancement after deployment

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